

Washington, DC - Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today released the following statement on the State Children' Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009:

“SCHIP is an important program that provides quality health care coverage to millions of low-income children across Nebraska and America,” said Fortenberry. “I support SCHIP, its extension, and an appropriate expansion. However, the bill before us today was not a responsible reauthorization of the program.

“This bill may expand the program to those who do not need it, and risks creating a program that encourages some families to drop their existing insurance coverage for the government program. Over the past two years, I worked with members of both parties to craft an SCHIP expansion plan that prioritizes needy children without health insurance, equalizes choices for low-income families seeking health care coverage, and strives to ensure a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars. I offered my plan as an amendment to the underlying legislation, but unfortunately a legislative rule prohibited it from being part of the larger debate.

“SCHIP' reauthorization should not be done hastily, and by refusing to allow consideration of amendments and other plans to strengthen the program, Congress has missed a bipartisan opportunity.”

Nebraska allows families with income at 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (roughly \$38,000 for a family of four) to enroll. Other states cover families up to 350% of the Federal Poverty Level (roughly \$70,000 a year for a family of four), regardless of existing health care coverage.

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